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Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States

Commandery of the District of Columbia

AN ADDRESS

Delivered at the Stated Meeting of
May 1, 1918

By

THE COMMANDER

Lieutenant-General NELSON A. MILES
United States Army

On his election as Commander of the Commandery
May 1, 1918

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Companions of the Loyal Legion, Distinguished Guests and Friends: Mindful of the marked consideration you accord in conferring upon me your highest title, I assure you that it is fully appreciated. It is an added honor to assume the responsibilities of the office following so distinguished a patriot as Judge Stanton J. Peelle, who has during the past year presided with the same grace and marked ability with which he has heretofore adorned many important positions.

I have long been associated with this honorable body of patriots, being one of the early members of the Massachusetts Commandery, a charter member of the Oregon and Kansas Commanderies, commander of the California Commandery and later senior vice-commander of the national organization. You may know that I hold in sacred regard the principles upon which the order was founded, the sublime patriotism that inspired its members, and the glorious achievements you and your companions wrought a half century ago for the people of our beloved country and those of other lands. Upon the success or failure of your heroic services and sacrifice depended the weal or woe of the human race. In my opinion there is not to be found in the wide world an organization inspired by higher motives or possessed of more exalted and purer principles than the Loyal Legion.

Universal freedom, liberal government and the sovereignty of man have been of slow growth, and have required centuries of time to become established. The system of government you and your companions, by valor and fortitude, preserved and maintained, embraced those priceless jewels of human happiness—"civil and religious liberty." During the past century and a half our Republic has passed through many perilous times. The black clouds of war have at times threatened our national existence, yet with a consciousness of right and justice to defend them, our people have maintained their liberty and their system of government.

During the world's history, the human race has been chiefly governed by superstition and despotism. Two hundred years ago the great majority of the human family were either vassals, serfs, peons, or abject subjects of some despotic power.

Whenever humanity reached a higher order of intelligence, a love of liberty was manifested, progress and enlightenment were developed and a higher degree of civil government created, only in time to be destroyed by ignorance and brute force.

The refined civilization of Persia, Egypt, Greece and ancient Rome, all perished beneath the ruthless ambition for conquest and spoilation.

The earnest protest of such philosophers and patriots as Plato and Aristotle were fruitless against the remorseless hordes controlled by usurpers and despots. The theory of "the divine right of kings" is offensive to the highest order of human intelligence. The superstition that some hundreds or thousands of years ago an all-wise and benevolent Providence selected any particular family to govern a large portion or the whole of the human race has been many times repudiated.

In the course of centuries a higher order of civilization has been adopted and gradually the light of universal freedom and justice has appeared through the dark shadows of oppression and despotism. It appeared at different times and places in European countries. Its advocates met only prejudice and cruel persecution.

Yet the principles of justice and independence of thought and action, once implanted in the hearts and minds of intelligent people, were cherished and maintained with a courage and fidelity that could not be destroyed.

Our ancestors fled from the cruelty and despotism of the old world. They abandoned all the endearments of home and sought to find a land in the wilderness of America, where they could enjoy "civil and religious liberty." They felled the

forest, they cleared the fields, they established their colonies and created communities controlled and governed by the will of the people. The justice and spirit of the Magna Charta has prevailed for over seven hundred years. Under the principles enunciated in that compact framed nearly three hundred years ago in the cabin of the Mayflower—in the Articles of Association, 1774—in the Macklenburg Declaration of Independence, 1775—in the Declaration of Independence proclaimed at Philadelphia in 1776—in the Articles of Federation, 1777, and finally, 1787, in that grandest document ever framed by human wisdom, the American Constitution—under these principles our wonderful civilization has developed, unequalled in human history. The influence of our mighty republic has not only blessed hundreds of millions, that have gone before, but is giving our people of today greater independence, comfort and happiness than any people have heretofore enjoyed. It has extended its beneficent influence to the greater portion of the human race now living under constitutions copied after our own. And for these blessings hundreds of thousands of Americans are battling today upon the red fields of war.

Unfortunately, at this hour when civilization has reached its highest degree of excellence, selfish ambition—lust for unjustifiable conquest—has brought the welfare of the race to its severest crisis. It has deluged a continent with heroic blood, it has devastated vast territories with desolation, and produced untold suffering and sacrifice.

In the most unjustifiable, appalling and colossal of all wars, it seeks to restore a despotism that has cursed the world for thousands of years. A small minority is now attempting supreme control, not by right and justice, reason and humanity, but by the force of arms.

Science, ingenuity, and the wealth of nations is to be used not for the welfare of the race but for destruction. We cannot believe that we have witnessed the zenith of our glory, and that

henceforth the pendulum of the world's fate must swing back to barbaric depotism!

To that mighty, yet liberal, Empire of Great Britain, to the courtly and heroic people of France, to the dauntless and chivalrous people of Italy, as well as to the long suffering peoples of the smaller countries, we owe eternal loyalty. To the strong liberty-loving people of Russia we owe an unpaid debt of gratitude. They have suffered the greatest deprivations. They have longest endured the depressing and oppressive effect of imperial power. They have placed more men in the theater of war and have suffered a greater number of casualties than any other nation. They have been deceived and betrayed, yet I have confidence in their patriotism and fortitude. They are passing through the same experiences of turmoil, communism and chaos that other republics have experienced.

I have been twice in that country and across the vast territory of Siberia and I believe, that with encouragement and support its mighty power and resources will yet be united in the cause of right and justice.

In this serious crisis the words of the Immortal Lincoln are as applicable today as they were the day they were uttered: "With malice towards none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in—and to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations." As all human events must come to an end, I trust that a just and lasting peace may come and come speedily, and that that peace may be as enduring and glorious as this world-wide war has been deplorable. A most impressive illustration occurred some years ago when two powerful nations were on the verge of war. They wisely decided upon arbitration, and mutual blessings were secured. One of the grandest monuments that adorns the earth was erected to commemorate that important event, and is now standing on the crest of the

Andes, 14,000 feet above sea level, dedicated to eternal peace between the two nations. It is known as "The Christ of the Andes."

One of the greatest evils of governments is that the great powers are supremely independent, under no control or restraint, governed by their own interests and designs, capable of making war and involving nations and peoples in untold deprivation and suffering. When this black cloud of war shall roll away, when the war drums throb no longer, when the battle flags are furled, and the black-mouthed cannon silent, I hope forever, and a mound of earth has covered the last of the millions of heroic dead, I trust there may be patriotism and wisdom enough left in the world to make this the *finale*, the closing tragedy in the horrible drama of war, and instead of the devastation of countries and the bankruptcy of nations there shall be created a Parliament of Man, a Federation of the World.

Thanks to the intelligence and genius of the age, the nations of the world are today in closer communication and intercourse than the colonies were after our fathers, by seven long years of valor and sacrifice, gained their independence. Every interest of humanity for the present and future demands that there shall be called a Congress of Nations, a Federation formed, and an impartial high court of justice created, with ample power accorded to adjudicate international controversies. That, and that only, would be an achievement which would atone for and be commensurate with the terrible suffering the world is now enduring. When that day shall dawn, the entire world will celebrate the greatest blessing in human progress, enlightenment, and happiness, humanity will have assembled to a higher sphere, a more exalted and purer destiny.





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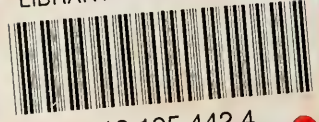


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